

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

SS-20 SPC-03 L-03 H-03 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 DRC-01

/083 W

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R 060848Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1216

INFO USSAG

CINCPAC FT SHAFTER HAWAII

DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3707

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MASS, EAID, TH

SUBJECT : PRESS VISIT TO USSAG

REF: BANGKOK 3335

1. IN ABSENCE OF WASHINGTON GUIDANCE ON MEDIA ACCESS TO BASES IN THAILAND, AMBASSADOR HAS NOT YET REPLIED TO FOISIE REQUEST REFTEL FOR INDIVIDUAL VISIT TO INTERVIEW GENERAL O'KEEFE AT USSAG HEADQUARTERS, NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE BASE.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GENERAL O'KEEFE WILL BE OUT OF COUNTRY FOR THE REST OF THE MONTH, PERMITTING ADDITIONAL TIME FOR CONSIDERING GUIDELINES AND ANY ADVANCE CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES WHICH MAY APPEAR DESIRABLE. WE WILL INFORM FOISIE ORALLY THAT APPOINTMENT WITH GENERAL O'KEEFE CANNOT BE ARRANGED UNTIL APRIL AFTER THE GENERAL'S RETURN TO THAILAND.

3. BY COINCIDENCE GENERAL KRIANGSAK IS VISITING NKP MARCH 6. THIS IS FIRST TIME THAT ANY RANKING RTG REPRESENTATIVE WILL HAVE BEEN TO USSAG HEADQUARTERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE ANY CHANGE IN RTG ATTITUDES

SINCE THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT IS AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH FANK CINC GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ. HOWEVER, WE EXPECT TO USE THIS PRECEDENT TO SOUND OUT KRIANGSAK ON THE FOISIE REQUEST BEFORE END OF THE WEEK.

4. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, APPROVAL BY PRIME MINISTER THANOM FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF USSAG HEADQUARTERS IN THAILAND WAS EXTREMELY CLOSELY HELD WITHIN THE RTG AND WAS NEVER CONFIRMED TO US IN WRITING. ALTHOUGH THAI MILITARY HAVE EXTENDED APPROPRIATE COURTESIES TO USSAG COMMANDERS, INCLUDING FAREWELL GIFT TO GENERAL VOGT AND PROTOCOL INVITATION TO GENERAL O'KEEFE, RTG AHS CONSISTENTLY AVOIDED VISITING THE HEADQUARTERS OF OTHERWISE ACKNOWLEDGING ITS EXISTENCE, EXCEPT TO THE EXTENT THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES HAVE SPREAD THE STORY THAT THE HEADQUARTERS WAS NEVER PROPERLY APPROVED BY THE RTG.

5. JUST AS WE HAVE NO WRITTEN APPROVAL FORUSSAG, SO WE LACK WRITTEN STATEMENTS FROM RTG AGENCIES DENYING APPROVAL FOR PRESS VISITS OR TOHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE USSAG HEADQUARTERS. HOWEVER, IN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO OBTAIN RTG APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIA VISITS TO JCRC HEADQUARTERS ALSO LOCATED AT NKP RTAFB, THERE HAVE BEEN ASSURANCES THAT THE VISITORS WOULD BE RESTRICTED TO JCRC AND WOULD NOT BE BRIEFED ON USSAG OR ALLOWED TO VISIT THAT HEADQUARTERS INSTALLATION.

6. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE FOISIE REQUEST BE FINESSED EITHER BY ARRANGING A PRESS VISIT TO A SANITIZED USSAG HEADQUARTERS DURING GENERAL O'KEEFE'S ABSENCE WITH A BLAND BRIEFING, WHICH WE COULD REVIEW WITH THE RTG IN ADVANCE, OR BY ASKING GENERAL O'KEEFE TO MEET THE PRESS IN BANGKOK. WE DO NOT THINK EITHER OF THESE HALF STEPS WOULD PUT AN END TO REQUESTS BASED ON SECTION 29 TO SEE GENERAL O'KEEFE AT HIS HEADQUARTERS, AND THEREFORE, WE URGE THAT THE REQUEST BE CONSIDERED INDIVISIBLE AND POLICY GUIDELINES BE APPROVED AND COORDINATED WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES, INCLUDING CONGRESSIONAL STAFF,NOW. KINTNER

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